

which had been received at the time of the adoption of the resolutions, shall be referred to the Select Committee, raised under them, and that therefore all of a like character, subsequently introduced, could be allowed to take any other direction; then the whole character, scope and extent of them will be so limited or modified as to countervail the full, specified and declared objects of them. If this be true, then he has power to suspend, alter, or change, any deliberate act of this House, intended as a rule for its government.

I know full well the responsibility and delicacy of the Speaker's situation. I feel and acknowledge how important it is to the orderly management and proper deliberation of this body, that he should be sustained by all parties in his general efforts to preserve proper decorum. I would do all in my power, generally, to sustain the Speaker; but, in this instance, I feel a paramount duty to myself, and to my country, to urge upon this House a reversal of his decision. I trust that it will be reversed; that the legitimate and salutary results contemplated by the supporters of the resolutions may be reached. I wish that this course had been instantly pursued at the very first moment, when indications were given that the long established usages of Congress, in disposing of these memorials and petitions, from the first commencement of the Government, was to be departed from. The practice heretofore has been, to lay all these classes of papers on the table. This has been the practice not only of this House, but of the Senate also. There they were laid, there they have remained, to sleep that sleep of oblivion which they so justly merit. On some occasions, such petitions were referred to the Committee on the District of Columbia, from whose safe keeping they never escaped to see the light of day, or so accomplished that magnitude of evil which they were calculated to produce through the agency of wicked, thoughtless citizens, who originated them, or sent them here: It has been painful to many indeed to most of this House, that we have been carried away from that practice of both houses of Congress in the disposition of anti-slavery memorials and petitions, which, heretofore, has been found so safe and politic. We were driven reluctantly to pursue some mode by which we hoped to arrest that tendency of things here, which we deeply feared might lead to incalculable evils, and to dangerous results. We hoped by these resolutions to stay debate, to prevent discussion, to keep down irritating, heart-burning invectives, and to unite Congress by a strong expression of its feelings, and opinions, both as regards the States, as well as the District of Columbia; so as to remove doubts, give renewed security, and unite us more in the bonds of common interest, and of united affections; and that we might meet and unite upon a broad and common ground from which distracting and agitating questions might be avoided, all debateable grounds might be shunned, and where varying, and practically unimportant abstract notions and opinions might have no influence in preventing useful and practical results. Our aim has been to reach practical objects, to prevent discussion, to keep down the excitement of one portion of the Union against the other, to restore harmony, confidence, and that feeling of security to life, liberty, and property, without which governments cannot exist in this age of the world, and without which they would, if they could exist, be a curse.

Sir, I have been filled with anxiety and care at the course which things are taking in this country. My bed is not refreshing to me, as it used to be. Unhappy visions flit across my mind; thorns are planted under my pillow; the air does not refresh me as in other days; the sunbeams do not bring those gladdening and animating sensations to my frame, as was the case when our southern country was happier and more united; when the South, the land of generous feeling and of noble sentiment, the land of hospitality and of elegant and polished life, of warm, impassioned, and sweeping eloquence, and of moral and intellectual power, was one and united. These are the bright features by which our southern States have ever been characterized; these are the fine traits which adorn the lovely character of the South. This interesting country, in earlier and happier days, were united and happy, was full of hope—rioted in the grand prospectives of the distant future; and as the series of events unfolded the rising prosperity of our State and common country, all was joy and hope and gladness. The times are changing; slowly operating causes are producing discontents; and unlimited confidence; a thrilling sensibility has been awakened, under clouded apprehensions, that attempts may be made to unsettle the existing order of things by an interference directly in the District of Columbia, at no distant day, with the rights of the slave owners, and by making this a mere first move in progression to a more extended and general system of operation in the slave-holding States at some still more distant day. Our object is to dissuade the public, to substitute for improper, correct statements, and to present just views of northern sentiment and feeling in relation to our institutions, and to give the other portion of our common country an opportunity of putting down those wild and erratic movements at the north, by which those who aim at pressing their memorials and petitions upon Congress, that they may produce discussion, excite feel-

ings, and thus to force themselves and their objects into the notice, and under the consideration of a thinking, speaking, and writing age, may fall short of their aim. Their success will best be secured, and their ends best answered, if they can but so far press themselves and their objects upon the notice of the country as to produce excitement, awaken resentment, or elicit abuse. Under the silence of conciliatory, or under the indignant rebukes of the lovers of order and stable governments, they will dwindle down to their proper and safe dimensions. If let alone, they will sink into that insignificance which they merit; they will sink under those rebukes from the moral and intellectual forces of our northern brethren which seem to await them. If they progress, the battle must be, will be, fought at the North. The good of society, the safety and happiness of every portion of this country, will bring about this result: for if these crusaders against the rights and interests of the slave-holding States, are permitted by northern portions of this country to move on upon their erratic and frantic course, they will produce such throes and convulsions not only in the south, but in the north, that the established order of things will become unsettled; the reign of law and of liberty will be endangered.

The South, sir, ought never to discuss it, for discussion will produce excitement; one degree of excitement will beget another; a warm and animated southern excitement will, nay, must, produce a corresponding northern excitement; each will grow in character; and in degree, until a grand northern interest may stand opposed to a grand southern interest. The North, then, becomes arrayed against the South, and the South against the North. I will not allow myself to inquire, under a conjuncture like this, what will become of this our beloved and happy country? Under such circumstances, truly will the hearts of patriots tremble for the ark of our political safety. The ground assumed in the resolutions is not only a broad and common ground, upon which all may safely unite, but is one broad and ample enough to sustain all the rights and interests of the South. Under the compromise of the States which led to the formation of this Government and to the adoption of the constitution of the United States, we believe, however other gentlemen may differ from us, that Congress, under it, has no power whatever to interfere directly or indirectly with the slave property of the citizens within the District of Columbia, or to cause it to interfere with houses or land or any other description of property. It cannot do this otherwise than in such way, and for such high and necessary purposes, as has been clearly and definitely expressed in the constitution itself. Property cannot be taken by the Government from its citizens without full and adequate compensation, and then only for such important purposes, and for such absolute wants, as the safety of the country may require. Under these compromises, in reference to the property of the slaveholding States: the constitution of the United States was adopted, under these understandings the Government was formed, upon these, as their proper basis, rests the constitution and Government. These, then, under legitimate deductions of reason, are the spirit and life of the constitution and Government; and under their broad banner we the people will protect and defend our property and lives, should this sad alternative ever be forced upon us. When Virginia and Maryland made a cessation of the ten miles square, within the limits of this District they never for a moment believed, that the original and inherent right of those States would or could be transferred to Congress, so that it could interfere with the rights of property of their citizens, who lived upon the soil. Neither could Maryland or Virginia do any such transference. The constitution of neither State gave any such power to their respective Legislatures. If no such power resided in the constitution, then any such attempt to exercise it on the part of the Legislatures would have been a gross usurpation of power, never yielded by the people. Nothing but an act of the people in convention could have yielded that power, which certainly was never granted under those State constitutions. Then it is as clear as light, that the Congress of the United States never can interfere, so as to emancipate the slaves in the District of Columbia, until the people of Virginia and Maryland, in conventions of the people of those States, shall see proper to confer the power. I believe that an unfortunate issue was made up, when a fundamental principle of our Government was connected with the question of slavery. What would, if this course should be pursued, be the result? By a forced and unnatural action of this House, you would drive—not the abolitionists, for they under any circumstances are and will be against us—but you drive on a most important vote, those who differ with us on a mere abstract legal opinion, but who are among our very best friends; the abiding friends of southern rights, and who are firm and unwavering supporters of those compromises, under which the States united, to form the Government of the United States. This denial of the right to petition gentlemen never could have yielded. They would have been rebuked by public sentiment for yielding one of the great principles upon which rests fundamentally not only our Government, but without which no free government can exist. Besides, sir, where was the necessity of taking this ground? It is one which is impracticable; one

which cannot be maintained by republicans. It would, if persevered in, drive from us those very friends who, to protect and defend the existing order of things, to preserve the Government, protect and defend the Union of these, and the rights and interests of the southern, or of any other portion of this confederacy, would, in the manly and patriotic language of the present Governor of Massachusetts, used some years ago, buckle on their knapsacks, and with arms in hand, rally to the support of the laws and constitution of this country. Yes, sir, to the defence of those very compromises, under which our fathers, with their families, cleared down British power in this country, and under which they, together, built up that form of Government, which is the admiration of the civilized world at this day.

I believe that without a resort to this mode, or to some other like it, by which the broad field of discussion opened on this vitally important subject should be closed, the heat created here, thrown off in every direction, like a great central fire, would not, like common radiant heat, lose its intensity as it departed further and further from its great source, but would gain intensity and violence as it progressed from the elements upon which it would feed. There is nothing in this country which has connected with it so many dangers to this Union as this very question of slavery. The unhappy relations which lately existed between this country and France, and which, I thank God, are so happily settled to the honor of my country, to that of France, and of England, was, to the lovers of order and security, a matter of secondary importance; nay, a war with France and with the combined world, and a fortunate and happy issue out of it, could not be of half so momentous a consideration to this country, as a proper and safe settlement of this vexing and harassing question. This settlement could not be accomplished, and never will be accomplished by motions to reject "in limine" petitions or memorials. Good results can never be safely produced by illegitimate and unwarrantable means. If petitions or memorials are presented, licentiously abusing the sacred and fundamental right of petition, on the receipt, Congress will instantly reject, or will pursue such mode, as either to treat them with the silence of contempt, or will take such measures, give such rebukes, or inflict such punishments, as the propriety of the case may require. The abuse of a principle must be separated from the principle itself. Fundamental principles ought not, can not be impaired, or be treacherously upon them. Abuses grow out of practices upon them. Abuses, but too often spring from the wickedness of mankind under the purest forms, which free Governments can be made to assume. This is incident to all human institutions; but for this, the great foundation upon which they are built, cannot, ought not, to be disturbed. Those who administer this Government, or those who regulate under it, must have such virtue and wisdom, as will check and control, so as to give a safe direction to whatever may come under their legitimate action. If this should be otherwise, the Government itself will fall to pieces.

In 1805 a memorial was offered in the Senate of the United States, praying for the emancipation of slaves in the States. On the question to receive, the vote in the Senate was 19 in favor of receiving, and 9 against it. Among the 19 was the venerable and distinguished name of General Sumner, of South Carolina. It is impossible that the denial of the right of petition can be sustained under a Republican Government.

This distinguished patriot, soldier, and statesman, the immediate and intimate friend of Mr. Jefferson, in whose firmness, correctness of opinion, and strong republican virtue, Mr. Jefferson is said to have had more confidence than in any man in Congress at that time, could not, as a republican, with all his strong southern feeling, and his perfect devotion to the true interest of the South—could not, as a supporter of the true theory of the Government, do otherwise than vote, that this principle of the Government "should be committed."

In 1790, on the presentation of a memorial, praying for the abolition of slavery in the States, debate arose, and began to take a warm and inflammatory character, and to assume such an aspect, as to make it proper, at once to dispose of this irritating subject. Mr. Madison, then a member of Congress, moved to refer it to a select committee.— This was done. The report was made: this satisfied Congress and the country. Within a few years, petitions or memorials of a similar kind, were referred to the Committee on the District of Columbia. A strong report was made by Mr. Doddrige of Virginia, which was acceptable to Congress, and which satisfied the country.

Sir, excited gentlemen at the south, are surely not aware of the extent and character of the injury they are doing to our interests, by discussions on the memorials and petitions, which are sent here by unreflecting or wicked abolitionists. Is it not bad policy to bring either their newspapers, their books or their false pictures, into notoriety? Is this not accomplishing one of the objects, which they most ardently desire?

southern man, and as an American citizen, to observe the direction given to such anti-slavery memorials, as were presented. As they were offered them, they were successively laid on the table, and were never again called up. This was in conformity with the common usage, and with the few exceptions stated, has been the invariable practice of Congress, from the origin of this Government, to this time. Not a word during the whole session was spoken, to the best of my recollection, on abolition, either on the floor of Congress, or elsewhere.

I deplore it as a deep misfortune, that the common practice of the Congress of the United States has been abandoned; that the course of southern presses and southern policy has been abandoned; that the order of the business, and the time of this House, have been to a considerable extent, occupied with the discussion of these miserably disturbing petitions and memorials.

From my earliest recollections, from my childhood up to this time, it has ever been the settled and fixed policy of the southern people, never to write, to speak, or to print any thing on this all absorbing question.— Consult the old men of this day—look over your public legislative journals—look over the columns of the newspapers in the southern States, and you will find nothing to disprove what I have here asserted. Sir, I am not mistaken; this has been the settled policy of the South, and therefore depart from it!

The slave property of the slaveholding States has been, and is so surrounded and guarded by the sanctions of prescriptive right; by long lines of inheritances; by the approbation of civilized men at that period; and since its first institution, by the joint purchase with the united capital of northern and southern men of this kind of property; by the sanctions of laws, compacts, and constitutions; by the approval of a purely virtuous, and enlightened clergy; and more than all, by the arrangements under the plans of Divine Providence, that no question or doubt could ever be entertained by us. Our policy has been, and still is, never to discuss, never to entertain discussions. And if the countless, guards, which, we believe, are sufficiently strong to protect and to secure our rights, should fail us, we should then be compelled to employ all those means of self-defence and protection, which the Providence of God has placed amply within our reach.

What I have said, is not the opinion of yesterday. It is one, which was publicly expressed, and which was, I presume, publicly recorded, in 1826.

One objection urged against the resolution under consideration, is, that it is improper to re-affirm that Congress has no power to interfere with slavery in the States. How can a reiteration of a self-evident proposition impair or weaken its force? Can the repetition, for ten millions of times, that two and two make four, impair this self-evident truth? Or the reiteration of the truth, that the whole is greater than a part, weaken, one jot or one tittle of the evidence upon which this truth rests. Or how can the reiteration of the fact that Congress has no right to interfere with slavery in the States, add or take from the certainty of this truth? It cannot. The mover of these resolutions believes, with many who have voted for and supported them, that Congress has no competent power to interfere with the existence of slavery in the District of Columbia. I have already declared that this is my own belief; but, sir, all the friends of southern rights do not believe as we do, but entertain a different opinion on an abstract legal question, with regard to the powers of Congress, over the District of Columbia. Those gentlemen who differ from us on this point are as staunch and abiding, nay, as devoted friends to our institutions, as the purest and loftiest patriots to be found on earth. Was it politic or expedient, under these circumstances, to assume a ground on which, for practical results, the advocates and friends of southern rights and southern security under the compromises of the constitution, were unavoidably to be separated? Was it right to bring on a forced and unnatural action of Congress on the constitutional question, when it was to result in an impolitic division and separation of our friends? Was it politic that a weak vote should go forth, making it appear to the world that the great majority of Congress were against the rights and interests of the South? This would have given a false and unnatural presentation of the true feeling of Congress to the people of the United States. It would have produced distrust, created unkind feelings, and would ultimately have had an evil bearing on the safety and happiness of this country.

I approve the resolutions offered by my colleague, (Mr. Pinckney,) most cordially. I say to him, to this House, and to my country, that I believe his motives are pure and honest, and disinterested; and that his conduct on this occasion is worthy of that name which he bears, and which, connected as it is with the history of this country, is dear, and ever will be so to the American people.

Sir, if these resolutions fail to elucate their legitimate and laudable objects, it will be because the opportunity afforded for quieting the country, and for obtaining for all useful results a strong and decided declaration from Congress, shall be unwisely defeated. It will be defeated by creating unjust excitement and from bitter invectives against our northern friends, counteractions to the efforts which they have been, and are still making, to rebuke and prostrate the wild and unhallored efforts of those wicked men, who are acting without a just regard to the rights and interests of the South, or without foreseeing the throes and convulsions which must inevitably result from their course of action, should it not be arrested.

If these reckless agitators continue their course, and northern integrity and northern

patriotism should not put them down, these melancholy realities will be the result.— They will convulse this republic to its centre, and lay bare its massy foundations. Instead of conferring benefits upon the black race, whose exclusive champions they profess to be, they will stay, and perhaps forever, those meliorating causes which have been gradually exercising their influences for the last thirty years upon the condition of the slave population of this country, and will consign it to a necessary and inevitable condition of greater severity. Yes, sir, they may produce that deplorable condition by which their utter destruction may be necessary to secure the safety of this country. Was it ever yet known in the history of mankind, that two distinct colors could co-exist on terms of equal civil and political liberty? Sooner than this shall ever be realized, the one or the other will be exterminated.

When the abolitionists, in their Quixotic notions of general emancipation, press forward to their objects against the arrangements and the established order of things, under the plans of Divine Providence, they censure the wisdom of God.

I feel assured that the virtuous, the considerate, the lovers of order, the supporters of the Union, and of life, liberty and property, have made up a cool and deliberate judgement; that northern people have nothing to do with the institutions of slavery in the south; that to attempt to interfere, will eventuate in remediless injury to the black and the white population, and that the end may be to destroy that beautiful fabric of government, which has, for fifty years, given unrivalled happiness and prosperity to this country, and which has produced, by successive actions, the happiest changes on every Government in christendom. I have predicated my opinions and declarations with regard to northern faith and northern patriotism in reference to slavery in the slaveholding States, upon my earliest convictions with regard to that enlightened and admirable portion of our common country; upon those historical recollections, which made us one people; upon the declarations of gentlemen from every portion of the country, possessed of all the means necessary to enable them to give just views of feeling and of public sentiment; upon the declarations of the People in their primary meetings, contained in their deliberate resolves; upon the addresses and avowals of many of the best and wisest men of the north; upon executive messages to different State Legislatures in the northern sections of the Union, and upon unequivocal declarations and assurances of the great body of both branches of Congress. These are the grounds upon which I predicate my belief, that with the exception of the mere abolitionists, northern feeling and sentiment are perfectly safe, and that the moral and intellectual forces of the country will prevail, if southern folly and excitement do not prevent it, in protecting themselves folly and anarchy.

Under these circumstances and with these convictions, I call on the Congress of the United States, under deep and solemn feelings, to regard this question, which is most injuriously affecting the people of this country, and to unite, by some decisive act, to quiet and arrest the course which things are taking; for if this agitating subject is not settled, and excitement and agitation shall be allowed here, then you will meet in this Capital, sir, some one or two years hence, under such circumstances of feeling and of deep dissatisfaction, as will endanger the safety and duration of this Union. I call upon members from every section of this great and powerful confederation, under a just and proper sense of duty to the Republic, to compromise differing opinions, and to give confidence and security to every section of this blessed and happy country. This Government was born under a lofty and enlightened spirit of compromise; and it cannot exist one year without it. Moderation, justice, and forbearance, are necessary and cardinal virtues in carrying on the great plans of self-government, first conceived and executed by the conscript fathers of this country. All will be elemental war, unless wisdom, rather than passion, shall preside over the councils of the nation, in the management of the multifarious interests and endless concerns of this extensive and mighty country.

Correspondence of the Sunday Morning News.

WASHINGTON, March 2, 1836  
Nothing of interest has occurred here this week. The proceedings of both houses have been very unimportant, and nothing of moment has transpired out of the house.— Abolition is still a standing, though a stale dish in the senate. In the house, both Monday and Tuesday were consumed in debates growing out of questions of order in relation to the presentation of abolition memorials and resolutions. The southern nullifiers and Whitemen are uneasy at the disposition made by the house of this subject, under Mr. Pinckney's resolution, and lost no opportunity to express their dissent to the whole arrangement. But by repeated decisions of the chair, sustained by an overwhelming vote of the house, "every paper and proposition" relating to abolition, is referrible, without question, debate, or instructions, to the select committee on that subject. Mr. Wilson and Mr. Patton have attempted to give a different direction to the letter of the governor of Virginia, transmitting the resolutions of the legislature of that state on the abolition question, but without success. Their object is to obtain from the house a distinct and explicit declaration that Congress has no power, under the constitution, to abolish slavery, or in any way to interfere with it, as